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ABSTRACT

Because of poor attitudes toward educational involvement and a lack of basic scholastic skills, some students do not succeed in the regular programs offered in the high schools. Intended to be an authoritative analysis of the literature in the field, this "state-of-the-art" paper should serve as a guideline for teachers concerned with the development of programs at the local level to meet the needs of students identified as academically disadvantaged. The paper focuses on rural academically disadvantaged students, the factors which contribute to their maladjustment, and their personal characteristics. Conclusions reveal that programs must be student-centered and designed to meet individual needs. Successful programs can be developed for students through the total involvement of the school staff and the community. Related documents are available as VT 013 374 (RIE, April 1972) and ED 057 181. (GB)

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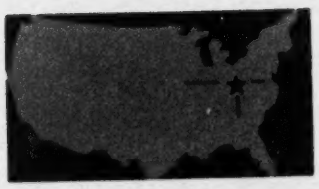

WHAT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TEACHERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DISADVANTAGED YOUTH IN RURAL AREAS

ED059352

preface

This publication is designed to serve teachers of vocational education interested in reviewing key concepts relative to the teaching of disadvantaged youth in rural areas. The compact nature of the review and its organization into guideline format should provide a ready reference for the practitioner seeking to develop and improve local programs dealing with the rural disadvantaged. Much has been written on this topic, however, the author has been selective by citing references believed to be especially useful to teachers.

A basic reference on this topic is the *Review and Synthesis of Research on Vocational and Technical Education for the Rural Disadvantaged*, by Charles Oaklief. This reference and a related publication for school administrators on the same topic are available from The Center.

The profession is indebted to Robert Walker for his scholarship in the preparation of this report. Recognition is also due Donna Stratton, State Department of Education, Frankfort, Kentucky, and James A. Barge, State Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida for their critical review of the manuscript prior to its final revision and publication. J. David McCracken, information specialist at The Center, coordinated the publication's development.

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WHAT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TEACHERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DISADVANTAGED YOUTH IN RURAL AREAS

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introduction

Vocational education—for all students! Vocational instructors are proud of their area of specialization and are convinced that this area contributes to the educational development of interested students who are qualified to pursue an occupationally-oriented program. In Illinois and many other states each vocational instructor can identify with one or more of the major occupational areas that have shifted into the educational limelight for all to see, namely: Agribusiness and human resources; business, marketing and management; industrial; personal and public services; and health. Each vocational teacher can identify with an area and work in his area of expertise.

Vocational teachers cannot focus on programs and fit the students into these programs with prescribed educational content and still meet the needs of all the students. Yet the charge is to meet the needs of all students. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 and the Vocational Amendments resulting from the mandatory evaluation in 1968 make perfectly clear to every vocational educator the course of action that must be followed today and in the future. In short, the needs of students must be met and vocational programs must be developed to meet these needs.

The framers of the 1968 amendments realized that the focus had to be placed on students and they used one of the best levers known to man—money. They were aware that the needs of the disadvantaged students were not being met, so 25 percent of the appropriated federal funds allocated by the 1968 amendments to the 1963 Vocational Education Act was designated to be used for developing and implementing programs for the disadvantaged and handicapped. Programs, services, and activities for students classified as academically, socially, and economically disadvantaged were to receive the larger share (15 percent) of the funds allocated to states, and programs for students with physical and mental handicaps were to receive 10 percent.

The charge to vocational educators was clear. Programs must focus on the needs of students. The needs of disadvantaged students must be met. Vocational teachers must develop programs, services, and activities that meet the needs of these students. But how can this be done? Who are these students, how can they be identified and what can a vocational teacher do to meet these needs?

The following interpretation resulting from the literature should serve as guidelines for teachers concerned with the development of programs at the local level to meet the needs of students identified as academically disadvantaged.

the problem

Some students do not succeed in the regular programs offered in the high school. Their performance is inadequate because they lack the basic scholastic skills and their attitude toward educational involvement is poor. The student is "turned off," dislikes school, and is on his way to becoming a school dropout.

A regular vocational education program may meet the needs of some disadvantaged students but, for many, the lack of success over too long a time has insured their lack of responsiveness to most conventional vocational programs.

This paper will focus on the rural academically disadvantaged students with attention to those factors which have contributed to their maladjustment.

characteristics

The academically disadvantaged student is characterized in many diverse and complex ways. For some, the causative factors contributing to poor educational performance are few; for others, complex factors cause the student to be classified as academically disadvantaged.

One cannot make a simple statement that all academically disadvantaged youths are members of geographically isolated rural families or that they are centrally located, or come from families of low socioeconomic status. The educator must know that some youths from economically and socially affluent families may be as academically disadvantaged as students deprived of a favorable socioeconomic status.

How does the administrator, the guidance counselor or the teacher differentiate between the disadvantaged and the privileged student? What characteristics do the rural academically disadvantaged youth possess?

Most teachers could respond to this question and would probably agree with the guidance counselor in the Warsaw Project (Walker, 1970). He stated that grade school teachers accurately identified most of the academically disadvantaged students who took part in the project by using the following criteria:

1. Lacking in the basic scholastic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics.
2. Slow at learning.
3. Underachieving.

4. Poor attitude toward school and teachers.
5. Frequent absences.

A teacher would recognize that to be academically disadvantaged a student need not necessarily possess all of the above characteristics, but the student lacking the basic skills would probably be characterized by the last four criteria.

How does the rebellious student become fed up with the educational system and ready to drop out of school? Where did the problem begin and how did it evolve?

Dropping out of school may begin and evolve as follows:

1. The student lacks the basic scholastic skills, reading, writing, speaking, and computing and does not learn at a normal pace. His inability to learn at acceptable rates contributes to low achievement.
2. Low achievement is not rewarded and the lack of reward contributes to the student's dissatisfaction with school.
3. The student's need for success is not met by the school, and he turns to other sources for success and fulfillment.
4. The school and parents prevent the student from breaking away from a situation with which he cannot cope.
5. The student chooses to withdraw or stay away from school. He no longer has a feeling of acceptance or of self-esteem.
6. He develops an unfavorable attitude toward teachers and the school system.
7. Finally, he is a major problem for the school, his parents, and society.

What do researchers have to say about disadvantaged students in rural areas? What clues can be gleaned from the research that will help teachers to become aware of the factors that have contributed to the educational maladjustment of many students?

Considerable research has been undertaken to identify the characteristics of disadvantaged youth. Environmental or situational factors and personal characteristics are often listed together but it seems more appropriate to consider both areas separately. Let us consider the environmental or situational factors first, and then observe the student's personal characteristics which emerge.

Environmental or situational factors that contribute to the development of personal characteristics possessed by academically disadvantaged youth are:

1. Two years behind in reading or arithmetic at seventh-grade level. Majority of grades below average.
2. Failure of one or more school years.
3. Irregular school attendance and frequent tardiness.
4. Performance consistently below potential.

5. Little participation in extracurricular activities.
6. Frequent change of schools.
7. Behavior problems requiring disciplinary measures.
8. Part of a family with more children than parents can readily control.
9. Parents inconsistent in affection and discipline.
10. Unhappy family situation.
11. Father image weak or absent.
12. Education of parents at eighth-grade level.
13. Few family friends; among these few, many problem units.
14. Friends not approved by parents.
15. Friends not school-oriented.
16. Friends much older or much younger.
17. Education held in low esteem by parents.
18. Few reading materials in the home.
19. Poor health.
20. Parents lack occupational skills.
21. Family income low.
22. Live in depressed areas.

Personal characteristics associated with rural academically disadvantaged youth are as follows:

1. Limited ability to use the basic scholastic skills.
2. Limited perception of the value of an education.
3. Lack of motivation to learn.
4. Poor attitude toward the conventional school situation.
5. Weak self-image.
6. Lack of self-confidence.
7. Dependent upon others.
8. Low levels of aspiration.
9. Short interest spans.
10. Argumentative and hostile or passive and apathetic.
11. Resentful of authority.
12. Feeling of "not belonging."

Environmental Influences

The school, the home, and the community surround the student and make up his environment. School is a big slice of this environment and we should help make school a place where the individual can live and work

happily. School activities must be related and responsive to the world of work and play. School must be relevant. Students should be able to relate the activities performed in the school environment to work and play activities after formal education. Therefore, the school environment must simulate or be a part of the individual's future. In fact, the school environment must extend beyond the four walls of the classroom to encompass the community and beyond. Still, the teacher should not think that the only direction is out toward the community and beyond. Certainly, the community and beyond can be brought into the classroom to add a real atmosphere to educational activities.

Phipps, Thomas, and Williams (1970), and Priebe (1971) emphasized the importance of the home and family. The teacher and each student under his supervision and instruction need the support of parents. Parental attitudes are influenced through their child's success in projects, youth organizations, school work, and work experience programs. Maximum success in working with disadvantaged students requires family involvement and family support of the goals and aspirations of the individual student.

The teacher often has influence over the community environment. By taking part in community action programs he can provide favorable conditions in which students will be successful.

The Board of Education of St. Cloud, Minnesota, suggested that nonadjustment to conventional school programs was a major influence in the lack of vocational development. Why do disadvantaged students have difficulty in adapting to regular programs? The Board of Education (1968), Wenrich (1964), Thurston (1964), Dawson (1971), and others have found that these students cannot adapt because they do not possess the basic academic skills necessary to succeed in conventional programs and that they are "slow learners." These youth have a limited perception of educational value and lack the motivation to achieve in regular programs. Watson (1967) learned that some of these students were not healthy and lacked physical coordination. The failure of these students in regular school programs contributed to the development of poor attitudes and poor self-images. They lacked confidence and tended to develop a greater degree of dependency upon others.

Other observable characteristics have been caused by this maladjustment to conventional programs. Wenrich and Thurston found that many academically disadvantaged students disliked school and became hostile and unruly or passive and apathetic.

Environment plays an important role in the educational and vocational development of disadvantaged youth, as pointed out by Hamilton (1967), Allen (1969), and others. Haller (1969) stated that the "shared environment" of information accessible to most people in a group and the "unique environment" particular to each individual have considerable influence over the development of the attitudes of the disadvantaged youth. Poverty or low incomes have created more disadvantaged youth than any other single factor, yet we cannot attribute the result entirely to this factor. Our "educational system" has also created its share—simply by its failure to change to meet the needs of these students. Educators failed long ago by not establishing educational programs that were responsive to the interests and needs of youth. Haller (1969) concluded that any deficiency in our

rural education programs would have an effect on the career development of rural youth.

What are the rural area shortcomings? Breathitt (1967) points to the youth of rural America and states that because of economic deprivation, inadequate health facilities, and unequal educational opportunity, rural youth have generally failed to realize the advantages of their city counterparts. Greisman and Densley (1969) state that the rural student typically is at a disadvantage in his access to cultural enrichment facilities such as museums, art galleries, and libraries, which has caused a gap in cultural development of these youth. But this gap will narrow. Technology has brought the museums and art galleries into the school and home via television. In addition, rapid, economical transportation enables these students to visit cultural facilities in urban areas.

Vocational Development

What should the vocational teacher know about the vocational development of students? How does an understanding of vocational development help the teacher to meet the needs of students?

First, teachers must recognize that career development begins early in the life of a child and is a developmental process continuing over many years. Second, recognition of this career development process by teachers and the integration of career-oriented content into the instructional program will add relevance to their educational activities. Students will be responsive and interest will be high.

In other words, vocational development begins early in elementary school.

Kindergarten through eighth grade. Career choice is a developmental process involving many choices and many decisions over an extended period. It is seldom an event which is made at a particular time. A young person literally grows into his vocation. The elementary school period is the formative time in this process. This should be an exploratory period in which the world of work is presented to children in a manner that is realistic and appropriate to their stage of development.

During the youngster's formative period, practically every decision and every experience has vocational significance. The course work and activities in which the child engages contributes to his learning of interests and the development of his abilities. Social aptitudes, health, personality structure, attitudes and skills are the raw materials from which vocational choices eventually emerge.

There are various stages of readiness for receiving occupational information just as there is readiness for other types of information presented to children at the elementary school level. Determining when a youngster is ready is a problem the teacher or counselor must analyze. Unless the youngster is ready for the information which is presented it will have little or no meaning for him.

The student's understanding of an occupation is determined as much by how he feels about what people do as by what he says and thinks they do. The "feel" he gets from a poem about the blacksmith may cause him to identify positively with the blacksmith even though this student may not

know what the blacksmith does or the kind of person he really is. He just feels this way about the blacksmith. Interests will be so unstable at this time that they can only be perceived as temporary and changing. Much the same thing can be said of values. After the fifth grade both interests and values become more of an indication of what will motivate children. Girls are more interested with values and boys more concerned with interests at nearly all stages after the fifth and sixth grades.

During the elementary school years neither boys nor girls will give much attention to their capacities and abilities. This gives added importance to how children may feel about various activities rather than what they may think about them. They will begin to give attention to capability and how they differ from other youngsters to a far greater extent after the fifth grade.

Since decision making is so thoroughly dependent upon parents at the elementary school period, it is extremely important to keep parents informed of programs and projects being planned. They are probably the most definite influence on the vocational choices of youngsters at this period.

In summary, productive vocational development at the elementary level is the result of the student's formulation, clarification, and acceptance of realistic self-concepts. Since the forming of self-concepts starts early in life, the counselors and the teachers should assist children in vocational planning early in the elementary grades.

Ninth and tenth grades. At this stage students are ready to be oriented toward an occupational goal. Teachers should be aware that 14- and 15-year-old students are ready to explore within an occupational area. Rural boys and girls interested in the field of agriculture or other occupational areas should have an opportunity to explore and determine career opportunities associated with their interest, ability, and capability. Conant (1959) stated:

> It is desirable for as many boys and girls in the high school as possible to have an ultimate vocational goal. It may well be that many of them will change their minds before the high school course is over or in later years; but, if a student thinks that what he or she is studying in school is likely to have significance later in life, the study in question takes on new importance. There is less tendency for such 'committed' students to waste their time or have a negative attitude toward their school work.

Eleventh and twelfth grades. Finally, students are concerned about occupational information directly related to their chosen field or the specific area for which they are being trained. These students have reached that stage of vocational development which places them at the entrance to a specific occupation. At this time each student is concerned with identifying job opportunities and landing a job.

Occupational information about the world of work should be integrated into the instructional program with the content that provides the key knowledges and skills associated with the student's chosen occupational field.

In summary, the vocational development of a person begins early in the elementary school and continues throughout the formal educational period. After employment, it continues throughout the life of the worker. Educational programs at the elementary level include occupational infor-

mation as an integrated segment of the whole instructional program and serve to motivate and increase the aspirational level of students.

Aspirations of Disadvantaged Youth

A teacher would suspect that the aspiration of academically disadvantaged youth to excel in school work would be low. Why? Because a teacher would not expect a student to aspire toward excellence in an area that has been fruitless, an area that the student associates with failure rather than success. Research substantiates the teacher's suspicions. Academically disadvantaged students possess low levels of aspiration as concluded by Campbell (1969), Larson (1969), and Dawson (1971). Often parents with low educational and occupational achievements have low levels of aspiration for their children. Failure by these students to perceive the value of education has greatly limited the development of educational and personal goals.

Is there a way to increase the aspirational level of students? The Warsaw Project, directed by Walker (1970), was concerned with the low aspirational level of selected disadvantaged students and the approach that could be taken by teachers to increase the student's aspirational level. It was learned that the student's aspirations could be increased when his attitude changed. This happened only when the program of instruction was revised to be responsive to the needs of the students and the teacher exhibited a genuine interest in the students.

What Can the Teacher Do?

1. Help the student to accept himself by showing a genuine interest in him. Make him feel as if he is somebody. Help him to reach goals that he has set. Reward and praise him for his accomplishments. Always use positive reinforcement.
2. Work closely with other people who have contact with the student. Inform parents of his progress and help other teachers to recognize his strengths. Encourage others to focus on his strengths instead of his weaknesses.
3. Help the student to become involved in group activities. Encourage peer leaders to give him responsibilities in which he has interest and the capability to perform. Assist peer leaders in rewarding the student for his accomplishments. Help the student to gain recognition. Encourage him to join and participate in youth organizations.
4. Encourage the student to participate in community activities.
5. Encourage members of service clubs and other community leaders to show an interest in students who need encouragement, direction and guidance.

To summarize, a student must feel that he has personal worth before he will desire to do anything. If he is happy with himself and really believes that if he dreams, these dreams will not be "pipe dreams," then he can aspire to reach lofty heights. But he must know that he is

someone and that he is capable. The charge to the teacher is, "Help this student to help himself."

Differences in Ethnic Groups

Academically disadvantaged students should not be associated with any particular ethnic group. It is true that certain ethnic groups do have a greater proportion of disadvantaged students, but those factors which contribute to the maladjustment of students are the same for all groups. The procedure for the identification of academicaliy disadvantaged youth from specific ethnic groups does not differ from other disadvantaged students. The results of a study by Hamilton (1967) substantiate this claim. He stated that very few students were ethnically disadvantaged.

The teacher must focus on individual students and determine their specific needs. Academically disadvantaged students will respond to student-centered programs designed to meet their needs in the same way. This is true of students in different ethnic groups. They respond and learn in educational programs that are structured to deal with environmental or situational factors that have contributed to the development of their personal characteristics.

developing occupational competence

The vocational programs in the last two years of high school and continuing educational programs beyond high school are designed to help the student develop occupational competence. These programs are designed to develop in the student the ability to understand and to perform tasks associated with a specific occupation or an occupational area.

In most secondary and post-secondary schools the advanced regular occupational preparation or training programs in vocational education do not focus on the needs of academically disadvantaged students. Consequently, placing these students in regular programs does not insure that they will succeed. As in the regular nonvocational programs, students whose needs are not met are also handicapped in vocational study.

Why do academically disadvantaged students fail to achieve at a satisfactory level in the regular vocational program? Studies of this problem reveal that low achievement can often be attributed to the students' lack of interest or their poor attitude toward school, instructors, or educational involvements.

However, there is real hope in prevocational or basic vocational programs designed to meet the needs of disadvantaged students, especially those who are academically disadvantaged. For many students, interest in a job or an occupation is high, and this interest serves as a vehicle to convey the student into educational involvements which may be arranged by concerned teachers to start to remedy the maladjustments associated with the disadvantaged, especially youth from rural areas.

Rural Disadvantaged Youth

Teachers are aware that rural youth are faced with a serious paradox of opportunity and frustration. Opportunities are plentiful for those who possess skills and abilities necessary for competing in a technologically advanced society but limited for those who are unable to compete in this society either in job competition or in social processes. Charles (1968) discovered that rural youth are not aware that technology is steadily reducing the availability of unskilled farm-related jobs. Teachers must help many of these youth who are interested in agriculture to develop salable technical skills in the nonfarm agriculture-oriented occupations.

Today's youth in rural areas are faced with the following three challenges: (1) take full advantage of rural opportunities, (2) realize the limitations of rural life and to recognize opportunities that exist elsewhere, and (3) be aware of their responsibilities both in rural and urban America. Vocational educators must initiate educational programs that will meet the special needs of disadvantaged youth and help each student to develop skills and competencies that will be transferable from a rural to an urban environment.

Guidance and Counseling

What does recent legislation in vocational education say about guidance and counseling?

The Vocational Education Act of 1963 (P. L. 88-210) in defining "vocational education" states in part: "Such term includes vocational guidance and counseling in connection with such training and instruction related to the occupation for which the student is being trained. . . ." In the 1968 Vocational Education Amendments (P. L. 90-576), a more concise reference to vocational guidance is made: "and such term (vocational education) includes vocational guidance and counseling (individually or through group instruction) in connection with such training or for the purpose of facilitating *occupational choices*. . . ."

Many teachers ask: When should occupational or vocational choices be made? Obviously, the outmoded twelfth-grade career night is not the answer if the high school curriculum is to help prepare students for vocations.

Most of the questions dealing with when to make a vocational choice can be resolved if we accept the idea that vocational choice is not a point in time but a process. Career development begins in childhood, and occupational experiences, therefore, are as essential to elementary school children as they are to high school and post-high school youth. Research shows that school life begins when a child enters kindergarten or the first grade. Guidance should begin at this time, and a planned program providing information about occupations should start in the primary grades. Work is a way of life, one of the fundamental tasks of all human beings. The most adequate human adjustment occurs when the nature of the work task is congruent with the aptitudes, interests, and values of students and should begin in the elementary school and continue through life.

How can teachers assist in developing vocational programs in their respective schools that will be responsive to the needs of students? How can the teacher reorganize existing instructional programs so that they will be career oriented?

In response to the first question, educational programs in vocational education must be student-centered, not content-centered. Instructional content should emerge as the student's needs are assessed. To be most effective, instruction must be individualized. Disadvantaged students, or students with special needs, will find that the instructional approach is relevant when "customized" to meet their individual needs.

To get at the answer of the second question, the teacher should be familiar with the vocational development process. The following theories, on which there is much general agreement among educators, are helpful in explaining the process.

1. Vocational choice is a process.
2. The process begins early and continues late into life.
3. The process is composed of a series of life stages—growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline.
4. The exploratory stage (junior and senior high school students) is composed of fantasy, tentative, and realistic choices.
5. Early career choices are fantasy choices—choices made by students without knowledge of themselves or the reality of work.
6. Tentative occupational choices are made when students study themselves and their possible future occupations.
7. Realistic occupational choices are made after the student makes an adjustment between self-concept and the reality of an occupation.
8. Self-concept, what an individual sees in himself, helps the student to make choices in terms of the kind of person he believes himself to be.
9. The choice of an occupation is interwoven with one's self-concept and is one of the most significant status-conferring roles in a person's life. A job status allows the individual to form a stable opinion of himself and his position in the community.

Secondary teachers of occupational programs are concerned with the vocational development of students enrolled in their classes. These students normally range in age from 13 to 19 years. At what stage of occupational development are these students? Studies of ninth-grade boys reveal that they are ready to consider problems of prevocational and vocational choice but are not ready to make vocational choices. These boys are in an exploratory stage; not in a decision-making stage. They are ready to look at things, to try themselves out, but they have not developed to the point where they should be expected to commit themselves to a vocation. Ninth-grade students are ready for information that will help them establish an image of themselves in relation to the world of work.

The vocational educator needs to be aware that students, as they go through the process of vocational development, should be enrolled in programs that are structured to complement the career development process through which the student progresses toward an occupational goal. As stated earlier, the occupational or career content of vocational education may be presented to students in three educational areas as they progress through the grades:

1. Information about the world of work and occupational opportunities, Grades K-8.
2. Orientation or exploration within an occupational area, Grades 9-10.
3. Preparation or training for entrance into a job or job family, Grades 11-14.

Where do we start as vocational educators to help these youth develop their occupational competence? The first step is their identification and selection. A list of characteristics associated with the identification of disadvantaged youth was developed earlier. Disadvantaged students are identified so that they may be helped within an educational setting. The program should not be separated from or be quite different from other regular student-centered programs. Attention must not be focused on an identified group of students for peers, teachers, and parents to observe and formulate opinions. The administrative staff should emphasize that all programs in the school are student-centered and program differences are not unique.

Identification is necessary in order to attend to special needs of students. The teacher must understand the individual. This can be accomplished by gathering data under the three following headings:

1. Observation and inquiry. Observing the activities of the student in the classroom, while at play, and out of school, provides the teacher with insight for analyzing social maturity, attitudes, interests, abilities, adjustment and prediction of student behavior. Additional information to supplement observations includes:
   a. Interviews with pupils, teachers, administrators, counselors, and parents who have contact with the pupil.
   b. Personal information.
   c. Family and home information.
2. Ability and achievement. Indicators of ability and achievement are school marks, standardized achievement test scores, general intelligence test scores (both individual and group), special aptitude tests and standardized test batteries. Many tests are also available and useful in predicting success in secondary schools, in vocational education, in higher education, engineering education and other professional education; as well as success in occupations. These measures often point out that achievement by the academically disadvantaged student is less than his ability. It is this lack of achievement that contributes to the academic disadvantagement of some rural youth and points

out the need for the development of strong vocational- and occupational-oriented education programs responsive to students with special needs.

3. Vocational interests, personal adjustment and character traits. To the educator, interest represents a strong motivational force and this importance is readily evident. Many factors influence student interest in an area of study or in a field of work. Student interests are learned phenomena. Past experiences of a student play a dominant role in shaping his interests. The individual develops his self-concept partly as a result of life experiences which furnish him with evaluative information about himself.

   Students who have grown up on a farm or who have worked in a farm business and have had an opportunity to experience a broad spectrum of agricultural work activities. These experiences have involved them in an area of work which often proves to be interesting and which motivates them toward more intense involvement in similar activities.

   The interest of students in agriculture seems to be the most common criterion used by teachers and counselors for selecting students who will enroll in agriculture. In most instances, when a student enrolls in ninth-grade agriculture, he indicates an expressed interest in this area of study. All students who express an interest in agriculture have not had the same experiences and do not share the same degree of interest in the subject.

   A comparison of a student's expressed interest with his measured interest is of more value when reliable interest tests are available. The teacher is warned that it is more worthwhile to focus on inventories interest, since students are oftentimes unrealistic in their expressed interest.

   Assessment of the student's personality is necessary in helping him to undergo any necessary adjustments leading to success in accomplishing his educational and vocational aspirations. Personality traits are a necessary component of his societal and occupational circle acceptance. Measurement can be accomplished through observation and inquiry, as well as personality test batteries and self-reporting techniques.

   Character traits are another important aspect of the individual that has been given only limited attention in analyzing the individual. Again, their importance must be stressed. Character traits relate to predictive success of an individual. He may be more mediocre in intelligence than a classmate, but he may surpass the brilliant student by virtue of being more conscientious, productive, and dependable.

In summary, no single piece of information can stand by itself in the total analysis of an individual. All information contributes to the mosaic make-up of an individual which makes him what he is and what he can become. Information from a cumulative record helps to provide the many facts needed by the teacher and counselor or to understand the

individual and his needs. A better understanding of the individual is essential for determining educational programs responsive to the needs of the disadvantaged student.

Curriculum Design and Content

The low socioeconomic level in many rural school areas, poorly equipped schools, inadequate vocational facilities, lack of educational materials in homes, limited contact of youth with the industrial world, and low educational level of residents are all problem areas requiring improvement. These factors are interrelated and create enormuos problems in providing appropriate vocational education in the rural setting.

Vocational education in agribusiness and human resources for rural youth should stress employment opportunities in non-farm agricultural occupations. Research studies show that the lack of strong vocational programs has been a major contributing factor in the underdevelopment of occupational competency by rural disadvantaged students. Successful vocational programs must reach the disillusioned or poorly educated and help to offset the effects of deficient home and neighborhood environment.

The small rural high school constitutes a serious obstacle to quality education and equal educational opportunity. What can be done in rural areas to provide comprehensive vocational offerings to meet the needs of all students? Educators have tried several alternatives, and the following cooperative arrangements have proven to be feasible:

1. The area vocational **center. Students** are transported to the center from cooperating schools for part of the day to participate in vocational programs.
2. Cooperative arrangements among participating schools to share in providing a comprehensive vocational program. Each school offers one or two programs. Each student receives his academic education in his home high school and is transported to the school with the desired vocational offering for one-half day.
3. Mobile facilities. Specialized facilities are rotated among cooperating schools.

Four premises have been set forth by leading educators that are vital to a successful educational program in rural areas.

1. It costs less to train students before they leave school.
2. Schools must develop programs that will keep students in school.
3. Schools must help students make a transition from school to the next step in life.
4. Schools and colleges must become more involved in adult education.

The advantages of the rural environment should be emphasized by teachers while correcting the disadvantages. Employers believe that people reared on farms have learned good work habits and have developed other characteristics that make them good employees. However, employers

also express the view that these youth have had limited opportunities to develop a background in non-farm businesses. They believe curriculum changes should be made to provide broad vocational and technical programs which will enable rural students to prepare for successful employment in occupations for which they may be suited. The teacher has a real challenge.

Programs in vocational education must be effective. This is especially true when developing programs for academically disadvantaged students. Research has shown that the effectiveness of an educational program is dependent upon the following:

1. Adequate facilities, equipment, and supplies.
2. Public involvement in designing and implementing the program.
3. Emphasis on basic education and skill training.
4. Teachers trained in the use of appropriate methods and techniques.
5. Course offerings in non-farm and production areas.
6. Specific criteria for the selection of students.
7. Close coordination of staff administration, counseling, and instruction.
8. Written plans, objectives, and course outlines.
9. Systematic procedures for evaluation and follow-up.

Researchers have analyzed many programs that have been designed to meet the special needs of students. The following guidelines for program planners have been gleaned from these programs.

1. Provide meaningful learning experiences.
2. Provide greater variety and technique to actively involve students.
3. Encourage greater student responsibility.
4. Create a positive attitude toward learning.
5. Meet the needs of individual students.
6. Provide for increased student participation and interaction.
7. Give students more opportunity to express themselves verbally and to analyze situations of interest to them.
8. Attempt to teach students socially acceptable behavior and to develop wholesome attitudes that are necessary in our complex society.
9. Improve parent-teacher relationships.
10. Enlist aid of community members and agencies.
11. Make course and curriculum content relevant.

The teacher must consider students, staff, facilities, instructional programs, and instructional methods as he develops a program to meet the needs of academically disadvantaged students.

Students. What criteria should be used in selection of students? From the review of literature the general characteristics of many disadvantaged students may be listed as follows:

1. Poor general attitudes.
2. Lack of interest in regular school program.
3. Chronic misbehavior.
4. Petty criminal activities.
5. Incorrigible truancy.
6. Inability to get along with others.
7. Dropout potential.
8. Inadequate scholastic skills.

Staff. A program oriented to meet the needs of students cannot be effective with only the vocational staff involved. A team approach with the entire school staff is needed. Improving the student's basic scholastic skills is accomplished with aid from English and mathematics instructors.

The teacher should be secure, have a mature personality, be primarily student oriented, and able to "earn" the confidence of the student. Teachers of disadvantaged should be involved in a continuous process of re-education and training. The success of the educational program is dependent upon him. In-service training provides teachers with the ability to:

1. Understand the academically disadvantaged student.
2. Broaden their understanding in the areas of curriculum development, program planning, and execution.
3. Use effectively a number of evaluation and measurement techniques in appraising educational progress.

Facilities. The problems of small schools are the same whether or not they are rural. These schools are normally in low economic areas with inadequate facilities and equipment. What suggestions can be made to educators who are concerned about providing adequate facilities?

Select facilities that can be used by both beginning and advanced students and that are adaptable for future changes in technology. Install folding or sliding walls and partitions to facilitate shifting from small groups to larger ones and to different equipment and activities. Use existing facilities and modify them to meet program requirements. For example, the agricultural instructor should design programs to make maximum use of the classroom, shop, and laboratory, including plant nursery, sod farm, greenhouse, land laboratory, and animal shelter. Other occupations teachers should develop programs to make maximum use of laboratories, shops, and classroom facilities.

Many small rural schools cannot finance comprehensive vocational education programs to meet the needs of all students. As stated earlier, the problem has been alleviated to some degree by the following:

1. Establishing area vocational centers for use by several schools.
2. Lengthening the school day by adding class periods.
3. Using mobile facilities among cooperating schools.

Implementing Programs for the Disadvantaged

Several alternatives have been identified for implementing programs. A listing with comments follows:

1. Conduct at an area center for part of the day. Academically disadvantaged students may be transported to area centers with special programs which eliminate the need for individual school staffing and added facilities at the small rural school. Each of several school districts bear the cost. This is a practical solution for large or small schools with few academically disadvantaged students and limited staffing and facilities.
2. Conduct after regular school hours with existing facilities and staff. The after-school approach involves the additional time for individual instructors, but meets the needs of these students with existing staffings and facilities.
3. Conduct in separate facilities with staff assigned to teach only the disadvantaged students. Providing separate facilities and a staff for the disadvantaged is difficult to justify with few students. Financing the programs would not be feasible in rural schools.
4. Conduct during the summer. The summer program is a practical approach for meeting the needs of disadvantaged youth. The program could be implemented with existing staff and facilities. This approach would enable some students to continue with the regular educational programs in the fall. Staff members who conducted a summer program concluded that such a program led to early identification of particular needs, better understanding of student needs by administrators, teachers, counselors, and parents, and early identification of educational deficiencies. In addition, students felt more comfortable in regular school programs.
5. Conduct as an integrated part of the total school program. Don't consider the program to be special, unique, or different. Just meet the needs of individual students.

Instructional Methods and Teaching Techniques

Many of the methods being used in vocational education are well adapted to disadvantaged students. This field of education has been the proving grounds for students with special needs. The following methods and techniques which are being used in vocational education are well adapted to working with disadvantaged persons:

1. Problem-solving techniques in teaching.
2. Teaching of manipulative skills.
3. Small group and individualized study.
4. Use of demonstrations and field trips.
5. Supervised occupational experience programs.
6. Relating instruction to individual needs and abilities.

Although appropriate methods and techniques for disadvantaged persons are being used in vocational education, additional improvements and efforts should be exerted in these areas:

1. Smaller classes are a requisite. One teacher cannot work effectively with large classes and enrollments of disadvantaged students.
2. More small group and individualized study. Many of these students have personal problems which can best be resolved on an individual basis.
3. Better counseling and guidance. More information is needed about the disadvantaged student in order to give the most effective help and assistance. The full extent of their ability should be realized in order to offer appropriate instruction. This will require more knowledge of the student's background and environment.
4. Utilizing better teaching techniques and methods. Good students are easily motivated, but students with educational handicaps are more difficult to teach. This may require the use of different educational media based upon the level of learning and motivation of the students.
5. Better coordination of teaching activities to occupational needs. This may require more on-job supervision and job analysis studies.
6. The teaching of general education subjects should be related to the occupational needs of students. These students can be more easily motivated to learn communication skills, mathematics, and science if these subjects are related to their occupational needs and aspirations. This will require preservice or in-service training of present teachers or specially trained teachers in order to have the appropriate relationship with vocational and general education subjects.
7. The students should be placed in courses with proper titles in order not to place a stigma on their ability or status.

Utilizing Community Resources

Community involvment is essential to developing a complete educational program. The community can provide business and industrial personnel and public resources.

The school program provides a broad range of offerings for the development of basic skills. Training stations in the community help the student to develop specific skills. A student interested in greenhouse management should be placed in a greenhouse for work experience. Work experience enhances school, classroom, and laboratory instruction.

People resources of the community can provide a second source for enriching vocational programs. When a school provides broad occupational offerings, the instructor's mastery of all occupational skills is an impossible task. Specialized persons in the community should be involved and their expertise used. Persons such as professional spray painters, electricians,

plumbers, and masons provide students with valuable insight into occupational areas.

Community involvement in vocational education is important. Members of the community should be involved in an advisory capacity to evaluate and recommend modification and revision of ongoing programs.

Community resources such as public parks and recreational areas can provide additional outdoor facilities for students who have interest in landscaping or forestry and recreational occupations.

student placement

Gainful employment is the goal of vocational education. High-quality programs should be available to each student so that he may develop the knowledges and skills required of his chosen entry-level occupation. Directors of programs must seek out desirable placements for each student. Placement is an excellent evaluative tool for vocational educators. The success of a program can be measured by the success of graduates in future training or on-the-job programs.

Educators can asume that academically disadvantaged students who have responded to a program designed to meet their needs will have overcome scholastic handicaps to a large degree and will be able to favorably compete with their peers for jobs in the local community or other locations. This may not be true for these students before completion of the program or before they have responded sufficiently to a remedial program. In these cases, supervisors at cooperative work-experience stations must be sympathetic toward the student with academic deficiencies. They must join the educational team working to help the student overcome his maladjustment. A cooperative work-experience program will be good if educators do the following:

1. Identify training stations that will provide the student with learning activities related to his occupational goals.
2. Develop a training plan.
3. Identify training supervisors who are interested in the student and his educational growth.
4. Prepare the student so that he is able to assume responsibilities assigned at the training station.
5. Visit the student and his supervisor at frequent intervals.
6. Help the student to keep adequate records.
7. Publicize the cooperative work-experience programs.
8. Relate instructional activities at the school with work activities at the training station.
9. Confer with the supervisor about progress made by the student in attaining goals that were set.
10. Confer with the student about his progress in learning job skills.

11. Keep the parents of the student informed. Gain their confidence and respect.
12. Evaluate the cooperative work-experience station with assistance from the student, parents, supervisor, and administration.

Obstacles to Employment

In rural areas there are several obstacles to employment of youth between 14 and 16 years of age. Some obstacles are peculiar to rural areas and others are problems regardless of location. The following are obstacles in placing students for work experience.

1. Sparcity of rural industries and businesses.
2. Students cannot provide transportation.
3. Students' lack of maturity and sense of responsibility.
4. Hazardous occupational requirements.
5. Employers and supervisors not favorable.
6. School administration not favorable.
7. Parents not favorable.

Placement for experience in rural areas is difficult but there are several alternatives.

1. School laboratories for simulated work-experience programs, which could include shops, land and forest laboratories, greenhouses, plant nurseries, and salesrooms.
2. School-operated businesses.
3. Placement locations within walking distances of the school.

There are obstacles to placing disadvantaged youth on full-time jobs. The disadvantaged youth often presents to the employer an image of liabilities rather than assets. Five major problems consistently impose barriers:

1. Physical problems.
2. Emotional problems.
3. Resource problems (economic deprivation—funds not available for transportation, clothing, tools, etc.).
4. Educational deficiencies.
5. Criminal offense records.

The foregoing barriers to job placement are real problems for the educator. They are difficult to solve, but many youth can be helped if the reasons for the maladjustment are detected by educators in the elementary grades and remedial steps taken to correct the deficiencies.

Follow-Up of Former Students

The school must help the student to obtain suitable employment after completion of the training program. Information obtained will assist educators in evaluating the instructional program and making changes in instructional content and procedure.

Job placement should not end with entrance to the job, but should include a follow-up procedure that includes an assessment of the job adjustment (satisfaction, wages, training opportunities) and some feedback of difficulties in bridging the gap between preparing for the job and placement.

The follow-up program should be formalized, and not left to chance. The following suggestions should serve as a guide.

1. Assign a staff member for follow-up.
2. Develop standard forms to record information.
3. Communicate follow-up results to staff.
4. Use follow-up data in revising educational program.

summary, conclusions, recommendations

Summary

This paper focused on rural academically disadvantaged students, their personal characteristics, and the factors which contribute to their maladjustment. It is evident that environment plays a part in causing certain youth to exhibit personal characteristics associated with the academically disadvantaged.

Vocational development is a process that has its beginning in kindergarten and continues throughout the working life of an individual. Students must feel that they have personal worth if they are to aspire to lofty heights.

Academically disadvantaged students should not be associated with particular ethnic groups. Teachers should focus on individual students and determine their specific needs. No significant difference will exist in the response of students in different ethnic groups to educational programs structured to deal with environmental or situational factors that contribute to the development of personal characteristics possessed by disadvantaged youth.

Occupational competence can be developed by academically disadvantaged youth. These students responded to programs that take into consideration their interests, needs, and abilities. Guidance is an integral part of the curriculum design. Attention must be given to student selection, staff and facilities in implementing programs.

Programs may be implemented in several methods or combinations of methods, as the particular school situation dictates. The use of appropriate methodologies and techniques is essential to the success of these programs. A total school program does not stop at the school doors, but

goes beyond, into the community. Community resources provide a valuable means of enhancing vocational programs through resource persons, job-placement, and program evaluations.

Gainful employment is the ultimate goal of vocational education and this should be a major objective of the overall curriculum. Cooperative work experience develops students with entry-level experience, helpful in overcoming many of the hazards to employment. Follow-up studies of employed graduates form a valuable evaluative tool for the success of ongoing programs.

Conclusions

This paper has dealt with academically disadvantaged youth and has looked past or encompassed sparingly youth with aspects of social and cultural disadvantagement. Mental and physical handicaps were not considered.

We can conclude that programs must be student-centered and designed to meet the needs of individuals. Successful programs can be developed for students through the total involvement of the school staff and the community.

Recommendations

The review of literature of researchers in the area of the academically disadvantaged youth has revealed suggestions for the development of sound vocational programs for these youth. These should serve as guidelines or recommendations in the development of future programs.

1. Develop criteria for selection of academically disadvantaged students with your school counselor.
2. Design a program or modify existing programs to meet individual needs of students.
3. Provide staffings and facilities appropriate to the needs.
4. Implement programs as the particular school situation dictates.
5. Use appropriate methodologies and techniques.
6. Make use of industrial, business, and public resources in the community.
7. Use cooperative work experience where possible.
8. Assist in the placement of students.
9. Evaluate programs continually through the use of follow-up studies and advisory councils.
10. Assist students in gaining a feeling of personal worth.

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